God
294.3
For/Rel
59014

Digitized with financial assistance from

Government of Maharashtra

on 30 January, 2020

Processed at
The Preservation & conservation
Laboratory of
The Asiatic Society of Bombay
Date Dec. 13

THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA.

A PLEA FOR INDIA MISSIONS.

THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA:

A PLEA FOR INDIA MISSIONS.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED TO THE MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN, JANUARY 30, 1864.

ALEXANDER FORBES, Esq., A.M.

(LATE EDITOR OF THE 'BENGAL HURKARU,' ETC.)

59014

EDINBURGH:

EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.

1865.

EDINBURGH: PRINTED BY THOMAS CONSTABLE,

FOR

EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.

LONDON, ... HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO.

CAMBRIDGE, . . MACMILLAN AND CO.

DUBLIN, ... M'GLASHAN AND GILL.

GLASGOW, . . . JAMES MACLEHOSE.

THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA.

GENTLEMEN,—

I WAS considerably startled when, a fortnight ago, I received a note from my friend, your President, asking me to give you an address, and proposing as its subject The Religions of India. I was conscious of my own inability to do the theme anything like justice; for the field is so vast, that it would require volumes to exhaust it. I could scarcely run over, in the time allowed me here, a catalogue of the names of the gods and goddesses, the demigods and demons, the religious philosophies and philosophic religions, with all their various sects and subdivisions, which have been the fruit of the Hindoo mind,—a mind which seems, for the most part, to have given itself over to a state of chronic nightmare, so monstrously grotesque are the mythologies it has produced. Moreover, it seemed to me very doubtful whether you would listen patiently to even one of the fables which delight the Hindoo, as they are sung by wandering religious mendicants, or spelled out from a dirty tract, printed on a *papier maché* made from old paper of every quality, by the palanquin-bearer or the boatman, to his fellows resting after the toils of the day. I suppose there are few of us that have not read with delight the beautiful fables of Grecian mythology, in which the poet's art has exalted rapine and lust almost into virtues, and has concealed with an elegant

art all the bestiality of crime. I do not say that it is right that vice should be made so very alluring; but, in the pursuit of that knowledge of good and evil which is the employment of man whenever he commences to have a literature, it is better that the evil should be hinted at rather than spoken out in all its grossness, and painted with the utmost circumstantiality of detail, as is the case in the sacred poems of the Hindoos. I am sure that you would not follow with the least degree of pleasure the story of the senseless and gratuitous malignity of Krishna, and that you would turn with disgust from the tale of his loves with the Gopees. The effect of an attempt I once made to acquaint myself intimately with the religions of India was intense weariness; and as I do not wish to produce a similar effect upon you, I shall leave the religions alone, and endeavour to point out to you, in the present discourse, what are their effects upon their worshippers.

For this purpose, it will suffice that we divide the religious beliefs of the hundred and fifty millions of the inhabitants of India into three great heads—IDOLATRY, MOHAMMEDANISM, and the PROTESTS against these, arising from the spread of English education and general intelligence among the people.

I. IDOLATRY.—I have often thought, that were the people of this or any other Christian country brought into actual contact with the idols of the heathen, and were they to realize what idol-worship is, there would be much more zeal with regard to missions than is unfortunately the case. I have sat in my house on an evening in September, and felt a strange kind of oppression in breathing the air, laden with the rattling of

drums, and the clanging of bells and cymbals, which are so essential a part of the worship of the goddess Doorga. It seemed to me as if the Spirit of Evil himself had more power on the three days of this great annual festival than at other times, and that while he excited his worshippers to madness and lasciviousness, he put forth an unwonted influence to perplex and depress those who were not subjects of his kingdom. The mind at such times seemed to be filled with a darkness that might be felt, and, whatever might be our theories at other times, one would then be almost as much inclined to impute to Satan personality, and an active interference in the affairs of this world, as was ever Luther, or any of his contemporaries. As we seem to feel the more immediate and all-pervading presence of God on a sunny Sabbath in our native land, when all of man save the tinkling of the bell of the village church is still; and the rush of the river over its stony bed, the sleepy hum of the bee, and the sighing of the soft breeze among the fir-trees, are the voices in which nature hymns forth her Maker's praise; so in the loud sound of thousands of discordant drums, and the clashing of brass, and the sickening smell of incense, and, most of all, in the obscene shouts and songs of men and children, do we instinctively recognise the worship of him who is the very reverse of God in all his attributes,—of him who has been so long the ruler of the kingdoms of this world, but whose power we are bound to attack in the service of our Master, and never to cease in our warfare until those kingdoms which are now his become the kingdoms of our Lord. I think that if the people of Scotland could see with their own eyes how large a portion of the earth is still under the dominion of Satan,

and how fearful is his rule, they would not be so lukewarm as they are; but that men would be found to go forth to the fight, and that, instead of the almost apologetic tones in which our ministers are compelled to put before us the claims of Indian missions for support, contributions would flow into the treasury in mighty streams such as we know and have seen in our own day Scotland can pour forth when her heart is really in the cause.

I arrived in India about one-and-twenty years ago, and for the first year of my residence there I lived in the native part of Calcutta, in the house of a wealthy native gentleman, with all the members of whose family I became intimately acquainted. I therefore had opportunities of seeing idolatrous life afforded to few Europeans; for although the heads of the family, who were remarkably well-educated men, had themselves little faith in Hindoo priests and idols, they still kept up the observances of the ancient faith for the benefit of their numerous dependants, especially the ladies of the household. The large mansion, or hotel as it would be called in France, in which lived twenty or thirty separate families of relatives, was built round an open courtyard, which, when covered with a canvas awning, and lighted up with thousands of wax-lights, formed a very handsome temple for worship. At one end of it was the shrine, in which stood an enormous image of the ten-armed Doorga, made of straw ropes ingeniously rolled round bamboos as a framework, upon which the clay was moulded into a statue of the goddess, with a group at her feet, consisting of a lion and a bull, out of whose wounded side issued the form of a man, intended to represent her victory over a wicked giant. The whole was painted in gaudy colours, and ornamented with

jewellery, which, though made of *mica* and *talc*, glittered almost as brightly in the candle-light as if it had been real. The priests arriving at the due time, called down Doorga from the side of her husband Shiva, to inhabit the image, and to be worshipped during three days, on the evening of the last of which, the image being sunk in the sacred Ganges, she would return to her lord. This festival is looked forward to by the millions of Lower Bengal as the great event of the year. All the absent members of the family are re-assembled. All business is suspended for twelve or fourteen days, and but too often the earnings of the whole year are spent on the image, the Brahmins, and the debauchery. There is little real worship, such as the Roman Catholic pays to his favourite image of the Virgin. There are no fervent prayers made before the shrine. A rupee for the priest is all that is expected of the most religious Hindoo. But I, having witnessed them, can tell you what are the real occupations of that sacred festival, during which day is turned into night, for day would blush to shine upon the festivities of such a season. We commenced the holy rites by a splendid dinner, in first-rate European style, even to look upon which, in public, would make the Hindoo unclean. Nevertheless I sat next to the officiating priest, who pledged me in so many bumpers of champagne that his eyes were soon twinkling in his head. In great astonishment, I turned to a gentleman who still lives, one of the most respected leaders of native society in Calcutta, and asked him for an explanation of this utter disregard of caste, which at other times exercised over all such iron rule. His reply was that the Poojah came but once a year, and that, however decent and moral a man might feel him-

self constrained to be during the remainder of it he was at liberty to do anything during that season. Considering the important place that meats and drinks occupy in Hindooism, this answer signified much the same as if a Christian were to hold that on Christmas and New Year's Day he was released from the obligation to observe the Decalogue, which is binding upon him during the rest of the year. After dinner we adjourned to a long room where we were ranged round the walls seated on the ground, each with his hookah and pawn before him. Here I was surprised to find a large number of young and very good-looking females seated along with the gentlemen, and behaving themselves as properly as ladies would do among us. Was this a liberty of the season extended to the ladies of the family, at all other times so jealously concealed in the Zenana? Alas, no! These women were the mistresses of the respectable idolaters, whom I had believed up to that time to be so temperate and so moral. And the entertainment provided for them was suited to the company. Dancing girls for hours threw themselves, to the sound of music, into positions as disgusting as they were ungraceful, but the more filthy the gesture the louder the applause. My native friend told me that at the house of a Rajah at which he had been a night or two before, the girls had been stripped naked, in order to add zest to the entertainment. This may give you an idea of some part of the lasciviousness of idolatry, but there are inner mysteries to which none but the worshipper is admitted, which are more filthy still, so that even those who do these things are ashamed to speak of them to one another. What I have told you above is, as it were, a sample taken from one fes-

tival, of the depth of degradation to which idolatry carries its votaries, but a larger idea of it may be formed from a consideration of the fact, that the most popular form of Hindoo idolatry is the worship of the *Linga*, a representation in stone of parts of the human body that are never even mentioned among us, and that among the Saktas, a large and influential sect, a living female is worshipped as a manifestation of the active energy which drew Brahma from the self-contemplative repose in which he had remained from eternity. It is easy to conceive to what abominations such worship leads, especially among a people who are kept separate from all females except their own mothers and sisters.

But I have said enough upon the filthiness of idolatry. Let us glance for a few moments at its cruelty. It enjoins, as works pleasing to the gods, acts of cruelty both to the body of the worshipper himself, and to his fellow-men. One cannot read the Institutes of Menu, the prophet and lawgiver, the Moses of the Hindoos, without being horrified at the diabolical ingenuity of the punishments which he prescribes for slight offences, such as pouring melted lead into the ears of a Sudra who may have listened to the reading of the Shastres; and this spirit of cruelty has entered into the daily life of the people. When any among us take the law into our own hands—and I daresay most of us here have done so at one time or another—we are contented if we send our adversary away with a good sound thrashing. But this would not satisfy the Hindoo. His victim must feel the torture, and accordingly the records of Indian police-courts are filled with accounts of modes of torture manifesting an ingenuity of which the devils themselves might boast. A very common

way in which mistresses punish their female servants, is to brand them with the earthen head of the hooka made red hot. A man was brought before the magistrate at Chittagong for blowing Cayenne pepper into the eyes of his own son, a child of seven or eight years of age, who had been guilty of some slight disobedience. The Chili or Cayenne pepper figures largely in the accounts of Indian torture. Sometimes the head is enclosed in a bag which has been saturated with its pungent powder. It is put into the eyes and up the nostrils of the victims, but it is most commonly used in a manner too horrible for description, by the Government police-officers, to extort confessions from female prisoners. The ingenuity of the Hindoo can make torture even ludicrous. A Hindoo Zemindar, a neighbour of mine, tied the long beards of two of his Mohammedan ryots together, and burning a Chili beneath their nostrils, amused himself by seeing how the violent sneezing produced made them knock their heads together. The report of the Madras Torture Commission is full of horrors inflicted upon the people for the purpose of collecting a few rupees of rent. The body was bent by ropes and bamboos into the most painful positions. Men were compelled to stare at the brightness of a tropical sun until they were blinded. The body was smeared with honey, and then the wretched creature that was being operated upon was tied up in the vicinity of a nest of red ants, the bite of which insect is excessively painful. Men were suspended to trees by their thumbs, and—horrible to conceive—women by their breasts. It is true that these things were done by the Government Revenue Collectors and the Government Police, but they were only carrying out in the public

service the domestic institutions of the country; institutions animated by the spirit and moulded by the teachings of idolatry. I am surely not wrong in imputing these terrible things to the religion of the country. If it is right in us to ascribe the gentleness and the humanity of modern civilisation to the influence of the teaching of Christ, we can hardly be wrong in seeking the source of the spirit actuating the Hindoos in some totally different principle. If it is not the temperature of our climate, nor the form of our government, nor the colour of our skins, nor our geographical position, to which are to be imputed the justice, the truthfulness, and the charity which are so widely diffused over Britain, it is not to any of these causes that we are to look for the terribly different state of things which prevails in Hindostan. We worship the God of Heaven, and anything that is good in us we derive directly from Him. They worship devils, and are like unto them. Who but devils could suggest to a son that when his father seems to be sinking under the repeated attacks of burning fever, it is his duty to lift him from his bed and carry him through the dusty streets under the deadly glare of a tropical sun, with harsh discordant music preceding him, and to lay him in the muddy water of the Ganges, there to suffer certain death? for it is also the duty of that son, if his father should show any sign of recovery, to fill his mouth and nostrils with mud, and so to smother him rather than that he should return home again. Who but devils could have persuaded the Hindoo widow that it was her duty to leave the babe she was suckling, and to sacrifice herself on the funeral pile of her dead husband; her own first-born—perhaps yet a child—being led forward by the devil's priest to

apply the torch that was to make him doubly-orphaned? It is devils that persuade the pilgrim to throw himself before the car of Juggernath, and poor coolies to torture themselves at the festival of the Churruck. It is the doctrine of devils that men can attain to everlasting happiness by holding their arms above their heads until they become fixed in that useless position, and till their nails have grown through the hand; or by sitting in the heat of an Indian summer between two fires; or by lying for years on a bed full of sharp knobs; or by using the ashes of cow-dung for washing with instead of water. It is the devil who keeps the Hindoo in constant fear of evil demons, who have the power and the will to inflict injury upon him, and who must be propitiated by tiresome and expensive rites and painful fasts. But of all his inventions for tormenting his votaries, Hindoo widowhood is Satan's masterpiece. There is scarcely a family where that hard yoke is not borne, not only by the poor girl herself, but by all her relations. Left a widow while perhaps only still a baby, she has to grow up, knowing that the "desire of women" —marriage—is forbidden to her for ever. Whatever may be the lot of others, it is certain that she is never to know the love of a husband, or to bear the name of *mother*; that name so honoured in the East, that, as in Bible times, the young parent generally lays aside her own name after the birth of her first son, and is known for the remainder of her life by the name of Mother of So-and-so. But, in addition to this, the widow is to have no comfort, no enjoyment whatever. Savoury food is denied to her, and frequent fasts are enjoined upon her. She is to be the servant of all in the family. Ornaments are forbidden to her for ever, so that a

widow is known in the streets among the lower orders —who alone are seen in public—by her want of bracelets. Is it to be wondered at if such a life should drive many to prostitution, or if secret concubinage should produce fruits which would render not at all improbable the number of ten thousand cases of procuring abortion, which were estimated by the Missionary Ward as occurring in Lower Bengal each month. I said that the yoke of the widow is to be borne not only by herself but by her relations. She is a constant source of anxiety to them, lest she should disgrace them; and, in families which can afford the room and the jailer, she is generally kept a kind of prisoner. One day one of my native clerks came to me and asked leave of absence, in order that he might attend the funeral of his son-in-law. One of the bystanders remarked to me that the case of the poor man was very hard. The age of the son-in-law was only three years, and of his daughter only two; and he had lately spent a great deal of money—more than he could well afford—in the celebration of this marriage, which, after all, was to result in nothing. Wishing to say something to comfort the poor old man who was standing weeping before me, I remarked that he still had his daughter left. I was startled by the energy with which he exclaimed, "I would a thousand times rather see her lying dead at my feet. The life that is before her is dreadful to think of, both for her and me." Thus spoke an ardent worshipper of the Hindoo idols,—a man who, whenever I mentioned Christ to him, used to listen with a smile, and to say that that might do for the younger men, but that he was too old to change. Little can those who have not seen the yoke that the devil im-

poses upon his worshippers realize to themselves the full extent of the liberty with which Christ has made us free,—the exceeding truth of his saying, that His yoke is easy and His burden light. Christ freed the Jew from the yoke of washings and purifyings, and other ceremonies of the law, which neither he nor his fathers were able to bear; but that yoke was light in comparison with the bondage in which the Hindoo is held by the hell-invented doctrine of caste. Caste fills nature with men and things which defile by the touch, or even by their shadow falling upon one; so that the high-caste man walks through life, as it were, upon tiptoe, and continually holding up the skirts of his garments lest he should be defiled. Creation is deformed in his sight, for he cannot look forth upon the landscape without mentally separating its various parts into the clean and unclean; and the greater part of it is to him unclean. He is cut off from association with his fellow-men, the greater number of whom he dare not eat or drink with, or even touch. Caste absolutely commands the Priest and Levite to pass by on the other side of the way from the wounded Soodra; but, with an equal-handed cruelty, it forbids the high-caste man, when himself wounded, to accept even a cup of cold water from the hands of one who is not of equal spiritual rank with himself. Cruel, indeed, are the honours and favours of the Evil One. If the Brahmin is set on high to be worshipped, he is also condemned to an isolation from his fellow-men which is contrary to the gregarious nature implanted in him by his Creator, the infringement of which carries with it its own punishment. Were it not that men sin against caste and its laws, they could not bear them for a day.

Idolatry is lascivious and cruel; it is also false and untruthful. As in the times of the apostle Paul "Cretian" was a synonyme for Liar, so in the present day is "Bengalee." During the sixteen or seventeen years that I was in intimate and daily intercourse with Bengalees of all ranks, I never expected to hear the truth; and I was not disappointed. During the whole of that time I was obliged to seek after and be contented with the probable. The people themselves justified their use of falsehood in the following ingenious way:—They said that their hearers were so accustomed to set down three-fourths of what they said as false, that they were forced to add at least that proportion of fiction to their statements, in order that the truth might remain. If they embellished less the truth would suffer, for part of it would be taken away in the mental process which had become the custom of society. They were rather inclined to add on a little more, so that the residue might be the truth with improvements. The *bearer* or valet of a friend of mine, a magistrate in Bengal, one day told his master that one of his shirts had been stolen, and that he had discovered the thief. "Well," said his master, "get a petition drawn up and present it to me in Court to-day." When the petition was read, the magistrate was astonished to hear that a whole dozen of shirts were missing. "Hollo!" said he to the *bearer*, "you told me this morning that only one shirt had been taken." "Yes, servant of the Lord," said the man, respectfully folding his hands, "but if I had put only one shirt into the petition, the case would have been rejected as false. The officers of the Court would not have believed that a shirt had been stolen at all." The gods of the Hindoos are distinguished, in their histories,

as constantly successful by means of lying and theft. Is it to be wondered at that their worshippers are like them? If, in the Gospels, we found our Saviour and his Apostles freeing themselves from difficulties, or attaining their ends by means of falsehood, or even if the slightest encouragement had been held out in those sacred books to Jesuitical prevarication, is it likely that truth would hold so high a place among the virtues as it occupies in the Christian's creed?

Idolatry cuts away the foundations of everything that is good or amiable in humanity. What is the result of changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, has been admirably described in the first chapter of the Romans. I have, on more than one occasion, challenged, in the Calcutta newspapers, the orthodox Hindoos to point out in what way this description, even in its most shameful particulars, did not accurately portray the state of society at present existing among them, and no reply was ever made to me. They were too conscious of the terrible truth of the accusation. Read from the 22d verse of the 1st of Romans to the end, and say whether your pure minds are not stirred up to do more than you have as yet done, whether by personal labour, influence, money, and above all, prayer, to put an end to such a fearful state of things as is there pictured as the fruit of idolatry.

II. MOHAMMEDANISM.—Though there is no such thing as an accurate census of any district in India, still I think we are not far wrong when we assume that one-half of the population of Lower Bengal are idolaters, and the other half nominally Mohammedans. I say *nominally* Mohammedans, for Islamism, like Roman Catho-

licism, has a sacred language in which it shuts up its sacred books. Whoever would acquaint himself with the Koran must learn Arabic. Even the prayers which form so large a portion of Mussulman religion, to be efficacious, must be repeated in that language, so that very few among the Bengalee peasantry take the trouble of learning to pray, and those who do, do not understand the meaning of the words they use. All that seems to be necessary in Bengal to the profession of Mohammedanism is the rite of circumcision, and the repetition of the formula, "*La elahah ul illah, Mahumud Roosool illah*"—There is one God, and Mohammed is his prophet. Mohammedanism in India is, in fact, a kind of Atheism, and is of no use to its professors, except when all is going on well with them. When cholera breaks out in the village, or misfortunes happen to their crops, we find the Mussulman peasant showing the necessity he feels for a personal God, by his immediately borrowing one from his Hindoo neighbours, which he worships with much fervency till the calamity is past. They also worship the tombs of saints, and sometimes set up, like Jacob, a stone for a pillar, which they anoint with offerings of oil and milk, under the shade of some fine old Peepul or Banian tree. Bengal, as well as Palestine of old, worships under every green tree, for scarcely is there one tree in the country distinguished above its fellows by its size, under which we do not find a small idol, or the *tazzeah* of a Mussulman saint, or at any rate a few rags hung up to show that a worshipper has lately been there. Mohammedanism, as I have said, is, among the peasantry of Bengal, a fair-weather religion; but even in fair weather it has borrowed much from its idolatrous neighbours.

It has a good deal of caste in it, but this is not to be wondered at, when we remember that even Christian missionaries have been led away by this institution of the devil, so artfully addressed to the pride which lies deeply rooted in every, even the most regenerate heart. But Mohammedanism, addressing itself to the lusts of men rather than to the ascetic principle, which is that seized hold upon by Hindooism, has set free its votaries from the trammels of caste as to things. There is nothing which the Mohammedan desires, of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life, which is forbidden to him, with the exception of swine's flesh and wine. Hence we find that most of their wealthy men are given up to all kinds of debauchery. If they do not drink—which many do in secret—they eat or smoke opium, the almost invariable consequence of which is, that no sooner does a Mohammedan family attain to riches than its decay commences; and there are few rich Mohammedans in Bengal that can trace back their pedigree above one or two generations. The tendency of Mohammedanism is to develop the animal nature, and hence we find the professors of that creed, though sprung from the same stock as the Hindoo, much less intelligent, and much more bigoted and brutal. No rewards will lead them to give their children that education which in India is the certain high-road to advancement and to wealth, and which the Hindoo so highly appreciates that he will starve himself for years in order that he may be able to afford it to his son. I have often offered to pay the whole cost of a Mohammedan boy's education, but could not prevail upon the father to permit his son to go even to the Government College, where all religious education is as carefully

excluded as if the Empress of India were a disciple of Hume or Voltaire. It is true that Mohammed acknowledges *Issoo ben Mariam* (Jesus, the son of Mary) to be a prophet sent from God, inferior only to himself; but his Indian followers would rather that their children should join in the worship of their idolatrous neighbours, than that they should imbibe any of the dangerous learning of the Christian. I have not statistics by me to refer to, but I believe myself to be much within the mark when I say that not ten per cent. of the students of our colleges are Mohammedans. I am happy to say that this state of things is likely soon to come to an end, or at least that the inducements to study the laws and religion of the Koran are passing away. Up to a year or two ago, the law administered in our Courts was the Mohammedan, and a Mohammedan law-officer sat with the English judge in all criminal cases, who declared what degree of punishment the criminal had subjected himself to. This officer has now become unnecessary, in consequence of the enactment of a penal code for all India, by which all are to be tried, whatever their creed or caste; and the last mail announces that a bill has been introduced into the Legislative Council to abolish the office of Kazee. The Mohammedans now will have either to give up the profession of the law, or to study English jurisprudence. There is also a movement among the higher classes towards English education; but so long as the religion itself remains, it seems hopeless to expect that a desire for improvement will permeate the masses. And we must remember that the Mohammedan is, in consequence of his religion, an enemy of the British power and of Englishmen. The murder of a Kaffir, he is taught to believe, secures to him at once a place in

Mohammed's voluptuous paradise. Patriotism, then, as well as a desire to fulfil our Saviour's last command on earth, to preach the Gospel to all people, should lead us to direct an earnest attention to our Mohammedan subjects. The Hindoo may be led, by the secular education he receives from us, to despise the fables of his own creed, and, the Spirit of God helping him, to embrace ours; but the Mohammedan shuts his eyes and closes his ears to our schoolmasters and professors. The only way to reach him is by the living voice of the missionary. The only way to make him a good subject to the English Government is to lead him to the knowledge of the King of kings. When he worships with us, then will he in his heart be loyal to our rule; but not till then. However we may proceed, whatever plans we may devise to lead our idolatrous fellow-subjects to loyalty and civilisation, there is but one which can be successful with the Mussulman, and that one is to convert him. To speak of worldly motives only, a feeling of compassion and a desire to deliver him from the cruelties to which his religion subjects him, ought to lead us to desire the conversion of the idolater; motives of policy would impel us to Christianize the Mohammedan. But when we think that these poor creatures have immortal souls,—that in addition to the life of slavery and penance endured by the one, and that of brutal sensuality which is the lot of the other in this world, they are to suffer to eternity the pains of the worm that dieth not in the next,—how can we, to whom the oracles of God are committed, continue so lukewarm with regard to our duty to publish them abroad? If, during the Indian mutinies, we had been commissioned by the Governor-General to proclaim a free pardon to all rebels who

should come in and lay down their arms, how would the world have cried out against us, if, instead of delivering our message, we had remained at ease in our houses, suffering poor wretches to be daily shot down by our troops? But how much more guilty are we if we are careless about missions! We have a promise of a free pardon from our King to all who will come in; but we say nothing about it, and see myriads of our fellow-men perishing in ignorance that the King has ever deigned to think upon them. If men might well cry shame upon those who neglected to deliver a message of salvation from earthly death, what shall be said of those who will not give half an hour of their time, or a shilling from their pockets, to assist in telling of the glorious pardon proclaimed by the Lord God Almighty, which remits the never-ending penalty of sin? I saw two Sepoys hanged one morning in the terrible year of 1857, upon the same gallows. The one was a Hindoo, and the other a Mussulman; and as they both were calm and collected, and both spoke to the assembled multitude, I had an opportunity of seeing on what, in their several religions, they relied in the last dread hour. The Hindoo, after a speech in which he asserted his innocence of the crime for which he was to suffer, died as he had lived, supported by the Satanic pride of the Brahmin. Taking the noose in his own hands, in order that he might not be defiled by the touch of the hangman, and adjusting it about his neck, he turned to the crowd, and said with a loud voice, "And now you shall see how a Brahmin can die!" The Mohammedan was much more quiet, but kept repeating incessantly the formula, "There is one God, and Mohammed is his prophet." Neither prayed to any being who might receive

them in that unknown world they were so shortly to enter. The one thought only of himself, as the only God he had ever known; for among his fellow-men he had been worshipped as a God. He trusted in his own strength. His pride upheld him even in death. He, like the ancient Roman, thought more of how to die decently than of what came after death. The other trusted his salvation to a form of words. Allah was a mere abstraction to him, and his Prophet was but a man. As his God was an unknown God, he rested all his hopes in words: he trusted he might be heard for his much speaking.

III. We now come to the third division of our subject, namely, THE PROTESTS AGAINST IDOLATRY AND MOHAMMEDANISM, arising from the spread of English education and general intelligence among the people.

It is the custom to speak of the unchangeableness of the East; and men who ought to know better write and talk of the religion and civilisation of the Hindoos having been stereotyped or petrified some three thousand years ago, and of all things remaining as they then were to the present day. As for the civilisation, the remains of ancient poetry and art show it to have attained a much higher point than anything it can boast of now. It has deteriorated; and this was to be expected, seeing that the Hindoo has for the last eight hundred years been a conquered race, ruled over by rude and war-loving soldiers, but few of whom thought of encouraging the arts of peace, and, when they did so, preferring foreign to native talent. The beautiful Taj at Agra was built by Italians.

But far from the religion of the Hindoos remaining stereotyped, the very contrary has been the case. It may

be said to have given birth to new children every year. There is nothing easier than for a man to become the prophet of a new religion in India. It only requires a little hypocrisy and a little impudence; and any one who will forswear water, and take to cow-dung and vermilion instead, will refrain to cut or comb his hair or beard for a year or two, and will swing himself backwards and forwards on his hams for a couple of hours each day, reciting *muntras* and *slokes*, will soon find himself with disciples, whose offerings will keep him in idleness and plenty during the remainder of his life. Of course, his particular religion dies with him. But not unfrequently a real reformer arises,—one whose mind revolts against some particular doctrine, or cruelty, or abuse, of the prevailing religion of the district. He preaches against it, and if that particular hardship presses upon the people, such an one—especially if his life is virtuous, or seemingly so—often numbers disciples by tens of thousands, and his sect may last for generations after his death. But I do not intend to speak of such religions or sects at present. What I have to do with is those forms of belief which have sprung up in consequence of the presence of the English in India, and which are the more especially hostile to Christianity, because they admit the falsehood and untenability of the ancient creeds, but substitute themselves as a *reform*, instead of the entire conversion which the Christian wishes to bring about. I shall, however, touch this subject very briefly.

Within the last five-and-twenty or thirty years several reformers have arisen among the Mohammedans of Lower Bengal, whose aim has been to purify the religion of the Mussulmans, by casting out the idolatrous practices

which had crept into it, and by restoring to the people a knowledge of the precepts of the Koran. Three or four of these men have been very successful, at least in so far as they have made numerous nominal converts. The disciples of one of them—Doodoo Meeah—were said to number three millions, and he was thought sufficiently dangerous to cause the Government to detain him in Calcutta during the year of the mutinies. I am, however, inclined to attribute his success more to political causes than to his religious teaching. He showed his disciples how to combine against their landlords, and to pay them only such rents as they considered to be just and reasonable; and I am confirmed in this idea by the fact, that on a schism taking place among his followers, a Hindoo was chosen as the leader of the Dissenters, and for many years maintained his position as head of a sect of reformed Mohammedans.

But among the Hindoos, the awakening of their intelligence has been the cause of a movement, especially among those who have received an English education, which has for its object to seek after religious truth, if haply they may find it. I scarcely think that this movement would have attained to anything like its present size and importance, if the Government of the East India Company had not, from the very first, set itself in violent opposition to the Christian religion, and persecuted it, as if it were a system hurtful to the people, and dangerous to the State. If Carey, Marshman, and Ward had been allowed to teach the Hindoos the life and doctrines of Jesus Christ, as they were not only allowed but encouraged to teach English literature and science, it may be that the Hindoos would have accepted our religion, as they have our system of astronomy, which is in

direct opposition to their own. But the people saw that the religion of the missionaries was hateful to their rulers, and all mention of it was carefully guarded against in Government educational institutions, where the sacred book of the Christians was not allowed a place upon the shelves of the library, and a professor who should teach Christianity to his class was instantly dismissed from his office. They saw too that there was no chance for a Christian convert to get on in the public service, or even be allowed to enter it; nay, more than this, they saw a Sepoy, who had become a Christian, dismissed from the service for this fault and no other, notwithstanding that his heathen comrades petitioned that he might be allowed to remain among them. The young men of our colleges were thus shut out from Christianity, and the English education they received drove them from the absurdities of Hindooism. But the human mind craves for religion. They have turned to Vedaism or Vedantism, the oldest form of Hindoo-worship, revived by Rammohun Roy, who had been compelled by the pure light emanating from Serampore to abandon idolatry, but had not the grace given to him to embrace Christianity. Vedaism is said to be a pure Deism. It certainly believes in the existence of a God; but as he is an abstraction, having no personal qualities, never interfering by his Providence with either men or things, and known to his worshippers only by his name Om, which none of them profess to understand, the Vedantists, you will be inclined to say, might as well have no religion at all. And, indeed, this is what they say themselves. In a remarkable document, which they styled an Appeal to the People of England, and which they issued about three years ago, while they acknowledged

that the Government schools and colleges had opened up to them the whole of the learning and science of modern Europe, and expressed their gratitude for the instruction in these subjects they had received, they made it a subject of complaint that that very instruction had destroyed their belief in the absurdities (geographical, mathematical, and astronomical) of their own religion, but that it had left the void thus created unfilled. They asked England, in fact—though they themselves did not know what they were asking—to communicate to them her religion as well as her literature and science. I hope that the time has arrived when their prayer will be answered. Since the mutinies, the Government has been rapidly abandoning its connexion with the false religions of the country. Teachers in the Government schools are now allowed to impart religious instruction to their pupils, if they ask for it. There are Bibles in the libraries of the colleges, and native converts are no longer ineligible for employment in the public service. We may be sure that the movement thus begun will suffer nothing in the hands of the great man into whose hands God has at this time committed the Government of India. All know Sir John Lawrence to be brave, but in nothing has he shown greater courage than in the decided manner in which he has confessed his religion and his God, and at no time more decidedly and courageously than during that terrible struggle when the heathen had "given the dead bodies of the servants of Jehovah to be meat unto the fowls of heaven, the flesh of his saints to the beasts of the earth;" when Christians had "become a reproach to their neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that were round about them;" and when

the repeated and scornful question of the heathen was, "Where is your God?"

I would beg your attention for a minute or two longer, while I say a few words upon the means which are to be employed to overthrow the superstitions we have been considering. One too often hears in this country, and especially from University men, of the special training that is necessary for a missionary to the Hindoos—of the immense amount of learning that is required to be able to confute their learned pundits, and to meet their theologians with any chance of success; and from the days of Sydney Smith to our own, we hear sneers at the idea of anything being attempted by a "fanatical cobbler," as he called Carey. Now, I say that the missionary has nothing to do with the pundit, for he will never be his convert. As in the days of our Saviour and his Apostles, it is to the poor that the Gospel is preached, and it is among publicans and sinners that the greatest success is to be hoped for. It is in India, as it was in Corinth, "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." The work of conversion is God's work and not man's; and in order that He may have all the glory, "He hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." If the Gospel were a work of man's device, and were to be spread abroad by the means he generally finds most efficacious, then we might allow that it would be proper to sit down to study all that our opponents have to say, and to strain our reasoning powers to the utmost to confute them. But God has chosen the "foolishness of preaching" as the means by which his Holy Spirit

is to work in bringing many souls to Christ; and therefore we would say to all missionaries, as Paul did to Titus, "Avoid foolish questions and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain;" and again to Timothy, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith." Let *us* proclaim the glad tidings that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners, and not trouble ourselves to point out that Krishna's life is immoral and sinful, or that Mohammed was an impostor. If we cause the light to shine, it requires no effort on our part to sweep darkness out of the house. With prayer and preaching, a missionary who knows nothing but his Bible and the native languages, will make many more converts than the most learned philosopher who shall endeavour to bring others to his belief by pointing out the absurdities of theirs.

It is by adopting as her own a different plan from this, that the Church of Scotland has erred in her Indian missions. She set about them in what, to man, would appear the most likely manner to command success, but which is not the way which God has chosen, and to which he has promised His blessing. She determined to commence with the middle and higher classes, hoping that when they were gained, the conversion of the lower orders would be easy. She determined to teach the young in schools, not to call adult and aged sinners to repentance in the fields and bazaars. She determined, in Dr. Duff's own words, to train the Hindoo intellect to "move in the paths of literature, science, and theology, with enlarging freedom

and delight." She addressed the intellect and not the heart. And what is the consequence? Just what one who believes in the operation of the Holy Spirit, as the sole means of conversion, might have expected. The converts made by the Church of Scotland in India are almost none. There have been few missionaries equal in learning, fervent zeal, love to the natives, and educational skill, to Dr. Duff and Dr. Ewart of the Free Church. The scholars they turn out take a high rank in the examinations of the Calcutta University. The students in the higher classes would shame many a divinity student, even though educated in Aberdeen, by their knowledge of Greek, Hebrew, and Theology. Not less than a thousand scholars, from the child commencing his letters to the young man going up to the University for his B.A. or M.A. degree, daily frequent the noble Institution in Cornwallis Square; but what are the results as to converts? This I have no means of answering with exactitude, but I can tell you that the increase of the number of communicants in connexion with the Free Church Institution in Calcutta during the last ten years is only 64, and that the whole church, for which enormous sums have been spent, and which has been created by the most accomplished missionaries in India, consists of only 196 native Christians and 84 communicants. The Established Church of Scotland, whose mission is conducted on the same plan of teaching, instead of preaching, contains but 40 Christians and 24 communicants. Mr. Ogilvie, the missionary, wrote home a year or two ago, that during the fifteen years he had then *taught* in the mission he had never made a single convert. But to settle the question of teaching *versus* preaching, I would simply state, that of the 213,182 native Christians

in India, but 1010 are the result of the many years of labour and the much money which the Churches of Scotland, both Established and Free, have bestowed upon their missions in Calcutta, Bombay, Poonah, and Madras; while some of the missions which devote themselves to preaching, show their seventy thousand Christians, as those at Tinnevelly, or their sixty thousand, as the missions in Burmah.

After I had written the above, I received the *Homeward Mail*, in which is printed a long letter from Dr. Duff, addressed to the Secretary of a Committee formed in Calcutta for the purpose of erecting a memorial to him, in which I find the following summary of the results of his thirty-four years of labour in India. After stating the reasons which had induced him to prefer English as the language in which the work of the mission should principally be carried on—a preference which was right if the object for which he was sent to India had been education, but wrong if that object were the propagation of the Gospel—he goes on to say—"On these principles, and for such ends, an Anglo-vernacular School was established, within about two months after my arrival, which, commencing with five, soon increased to hundreds, and, for the last twenty years, to upwards of a thousand in daily attendance; many having risen to the highest grade of collegiate attainments, some of them being ordained ministers of the Gospel, and others of them occupying offices of high trust and responsibility in the Government and other services." The great mass of Dr Duff's scholars go to swell the ranks of the Vedantists. Verily, the system which he has followed has had its reward. It has turned out, as he says, many men who have done honour to their *Alma Mater* by their success in the world, but

how few Christians! The "some" ordained ministers of the Gospel do not certainly number a dozen; indeed, I believe not half-a-dozen.

Some of you may have influence with the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, either Established or Free. I would implore you to exercise it to induce them to abandon teaching for preaching. The Established Church has, I believe, resolved to make no extension of educational missions in India, but they are to continue to support those which now exist. Let them turn to the Rev. Dr Mullens' statistics of missions, and there they may see at a glance that this is so much money absolutely thrown away. A missionary whom they sent out a couple of years ago to *preach*, has baptized six converts in Gyah, the most bigoted Hindoo city in India, while Mr Ogilvie's *teaching* in Calcutta has not produced one soul whom he may present to his Saviour on the day when he has to render an account of the work he has done for Him on earth. Let the Church boldly sweep away all their educational establishments, and send forth the missionaries to preach, and God will assuredly magnify his own word. Our missionaries are at the present time competing with the Government colleges. If they cannot turn out as good scholars as they can, their schools would be deserted; and the consequence is, that there is but one hour a day of Bible teaching, to five, I think, of secular instruction. Can we call those missionary establishments? and is it not something very like obtaining money under false pretences, to make collections in our churches for them as such? I am fully convinced that, if the energies and the funds of the General Assembly's Indian Mission were at once directed to the multiplying the number of

59014

the preachers of the word, an abundant harvest would be the immediate result; which, reacting upon the Church, and stirring her up to greater efforts in the cause, would take away the reproach under which she lies at present in India, of being a dead Church, bearing no fruit, careless of obeying the last command of her Founder and her Head. I never had cause to be ashamed of being a member of the Church of Scotland, except when her lukewarmness with regard to missions was contrasted with the zeal of other religious bodies, and I was forced to admit the truth of the charges brought against her.

I have thus tried to set before you a few of the evil effects arising from the false religions of India. I have also pointed out what I think to be the errors fallen into by the Church of Scotland in her Indian missions. If there is error in what I have said, I pray that it may pass away from your minds as if it had never been spoken. But if I have spoken anything according to God's mind and will, I pray that His Holy Spirit may impress it upon you, and that He may stir up within you all a fervent missionary spirit, so that you may be made use of in the hands of God as instruments to hasten the coming of the time when there shall be neither idol nor false prophet, nor any deification by man of his own reason—the form of idolatry which seems to be gaining most strength at present, whether it be among Vedantists in Calcutta, or men of science at home. Lord Jesus, may the time, when thou alone shalt rule, come quickly! —Amen.

NOTE.

The following Extract from a Letter, written by me to a friend in October last, has reference to the subject treated above, and answers some objections to my particular views :—

"We had a most eloquent address of an hour and three-quarters yesterday at the Synod from Dr. Norman Macleod on the subject of Indian Missions. I am sorry to say that he has been converted by Dr. Duff, and defended Dr. Inglis's scheme of teaching. He said, however, that there was much to be said on the other side, and that he reserved to himself the liberty of changing his opinion. He did not advance any arguments that could not easily be replied to. He brought forward poor Mr. Lacroix's dying speech,—that though he had been preaching all his life, he was not aware that he had made a single convert. This saying has been a perfect godsend to Dr. Duff, and those who think as he does. They argue in this way: 'Teaching,' say they, 'has made no (or but very few) converts. Lacroix—excellent and truly Christian man as all admit him to have been—made no converts by preaching: therefore preaching is no better than teaching.' But if Lacroix made no converts by preaching, and the teaching missions have made no converts, by whom have the 200,000 native Christians in India been converted? The reply is, that they are the fruit of preaching, so that all missionaries are not Lacroixs.

"I was reading a day or two ago, the direction of God to the Israelites: 'If thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone; for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.' Now, a Dr. Inglis among the Jews might have argued that an altar of hewn stone would be much more permanent and ornamental than one constructed of boulders. But would the offerings upon the former have had the blessing of God? God commanded bloody sacrifices, but Cain thought that fruit would do as well. God has promised his blessing upon the foolishness of preaching, but the Church of Scotland thinks teaching a more *rational* mode of propagating the Gospel, and will take no warning from the want of blessing which attends its efforts both in India and at home: in India, where they make no converts; at home, where nobody takes an interest in the mission.

"Again, Dr. Macleod said that the object of our schools in India

was to raise up a native ministry. Well, Dr. Duff has been teaching for thirty-three years, and has had an average number of scholars of 1000, so that some 33,000 scholars must have passed through his hands. How many of these are native ministers—nay, how many are even Christians? If we found an institution professing to teach law or medicine, turning out, in the course of a third of a century, no lawyers and no medical men, would we not be not to say either that it does not teach what it professes to teach, or that it teaches in the wrong way?

Dr. Macleod said that native preachers would have much more success among natives than Europeans have had, and he illustrated his meaning by supposing that a Russian should come over from Russia and reside among us till he had learned our language, and then should commence to preach to us. He told us that we would not listen to him. Now, I say we would, if he came to teach us a higher gospel than was current in Aberdeen, and with greater learning than our Aberdeen clergy possessed. But the simile is altogether wrong. The European missionary is of the conquering race, of the civilizing race, of the learned race, of the race which not only protects the natives from foreign foes, and from each other, but who are the rulers of the steam-engine and the locomotive. It is a singular fact, that, though Eurasians and natives hold all appointments on our railways, from engineer and station-master downwards, not one has yet been made an engine-driver. They have not the courage nor the presence of mind requisite for such an office. Neither can they be put at the head of a mission. The European missionary in India is not to be compared to a Russian coming to teach in Aberdeen; but rather to a St. Augustine or St. Columba coming to teach our Saxon and Pictish ancestors. The Italian in the one case, and the Irishman in the other, had much greater success in making converts than ever Dr. Macleod has had among his brother natives of Glasgow.

00059014

Digitized with financial assistance from

Government of Maharashtra

on 30 January, 2020